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Congress of the United States **House of Representatives**

September 2, 2005

Congressman Joe Barton
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Congressman John Dingell
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Barton and Ranking Member Dingell:

I understand that the House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a hearing on the rising gasoline prices in the wake of Hurricane Katrina as soon as Congress returns to Washington. I commend you for taking immediate action on this important issue.

In South Dakota, the rising gasoline prices are having an immediate and devastating impact on our local economies. The prices in my state have been very high all summer, and the recent spikes attributable to the hurricane have made a bad situation even worse.

The President has asked Americans to conserve fuel. In my state, however, public transportation is simply not an option for most people. Trucks, tractors and larger vehicles are essential for farmers and ranchers to do their jobs. For many families, a simple trip to the grocery store requires covering dozens of miles. South Dakotans will do their part, but for most, not driving is not an option.

Because of the devastating impact on rural areas, I urge you to fully investigate the recent spikes in gasoline and diesel prices – both the increases occurring before the hurricane and the dramatic increases occurring after the hurricane. While it is important to have a long-term strategy to increase our use of renewable fuels and increase our refinery capacity, it's also important that we ensure that consumers are getting a fair deal right now. I believe in the free market, but

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Congress must ensure that the oil companies, refiners and retailers are not using this emergency as an opportunity to gouge consumers.

These price increases will have a significant impact on our national economy, but will hit rural areas particularly hard, and they couldn't have come at a tougher time. South Dakota's farmers will begin harvesting soon, and after that, many of these producers will rely on heating oil to keep their families warm. The supply and price problems will continue to be a major problem in my state. I appreciate your willingness to hold these hearings, and am optimistic that they will lead to Congressional action to provide needed relief immediately.

If you have any questions about the impact of the rising gas and diesel prices on South Dakota, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephanie Herseth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a stylized "H".

Stephanie Herseth
Member of Congress